TL 5298

Address by the President of the East Timor NGO Forum to the Donors' Meeting on East Timor, Tokyo 17th December 1999.

Co-chairmen, ladies and gentlemen

My name is Aleixo da Cruz, I represent the East Timor NGO Forum and I speak on behalf of the national and international NGOs. Thank you for this opportunity to present to you the joint position of relief, development, and human rights NGOs from East Timor and abroad

I also would like to take this opportunity to thank the World Bank, the UN, donor governments and other delegations for their efforts until now, and for their continuing tangible support for the people of East Timor.

The East Timorese people had one chance to vote for independence and they paid a high price for it. Today, after 25 years of neglect and compromise, the international community has its chance to help rebuild East Timor and to work towards the safe return of refugees.

The NGOs are concerned that:

- A dual economy marginalising East Timorese is beginning to emerge;
- Current development proposals appear urban biased, when rural development and agriculture should be stressed;
- A high proportion of the total amount pledged ($700 million) will be spent on the peace-keeping force. Security is vital for East Timor but we hope that a smaller force may be sufficient and avoid many of the social problems associated with a large peace-keeping force.

The NGOs consider that:

1. East Timorese Participation

- **Mechanisms must be created for local participation in all decisions on assistance, development planning and implementation.**
- **Priority must be given to creating effective means for the dissemination of information to communities, using educational institutions, community groups and public media.**

2. From emergency to reconstruction

- **The international community must provide the funds to avert a serious humanitarian crisis, and for reconstruction work, to avoid protracted dependency, especially in food security.**

3. A debt free East Timor

- **East Timor must not start its independent future as a nation in debt. Development assistance at this stage must be in the form of grants, not loans.**

4. Building the future

- **The quantity of aid must be sufficient. But quality is also important: development assistance must be appropriate and coordinated, and built on a coherent model and a strategic vision:**

4.1. Human Rights and Reconciliation

- **Donors should prioritize human rights and justice, peace-building and reconciliation initiatives at government, civil society and especially at community level. Without this long-lasting peace and sustainable development are not possible.**

4.2 Encouraging civil society.

- **The international community must assist local NGOs and community structures to build their own capacity and to build human resources in the country.**

4.3 Women's perspectives and needs

- **Donors should give active support to women's organizations and women leaders in all development sectors. Children's rights must be urgently considered.**

4.4 The environment

- **Donors must support programs containing enforceable mechanisms for the conservation and protection of natural resources, and include strategies for environmental and occupational health.**

4.5 Social Impact of Aid

- **Systems must be created to monitor and address the social impacts of development assistance.**

4.6 Donor Coordination

- **Donor coordination and the support of appropriate models for cooperation must be given due consideration and support.**

To conclude:

The international community has the obligation to assist East Timor to stem the current humanitarian crisis and to lay the foundations for a smooth transition to reconstruction and independence. It has the duty to meet timely and fully the costs of reconstruction and development. This (Tokyo) meeting is the international community's chance to make amends for the years of neglect and broken promises, and to invest in the stability and viability of a just new East Timor.

Tokyo, 17.12.99